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# CO-OPERATION IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE - THE ROLE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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For a decade I have lectured on this very topic at the training course for information specialists organized by the Finnish Association for Documentation. Accordingly there is a risk that my presentation becomes too elementary for the well informed participants of the 8th biannual conference of the IATUL.

My second problem is, that I have first hand experience from only a few inter-governmental organizations, namely UNESCO, IAEA, OECD and the Scandinavian organizations, and have never participated in the work of decision making bodies in other IGO's.

My third problem is the great number of IGO's, the majority of which have programs in the library and information field. In fact, these programs proliferate to the extent that there is a real danger of duplication of efforts. Especially in small countries participation has to be limited to programs of highest priority - otherwise senior librarians become "visiting librarians".

In library and information business international co-operation of course is a must. Not even the largest countries or largest libraries can any longer claim self-sufficiency as regards holdings or services. Therefore, the role of international organizations, like ours, and also of intergovernmental organizations is important. The nature of IGO programs often is catalytic: developing favourable attitudes and laying down avenues for co-operation as well as preparing international instruments for the purpose. Some IGO's have also embarked on concrete programs in creating information systems or rendering information services themselves.

In the following presentation of the work of IGO's I try to limit myself to organizations and programs of interest to our daily work in technological university libraries.

## 1. The United Nations family

### 1.1 UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Since its establishment, UNESCO has promoted co-operation in library and information services with special reference to development co-operation. The work is financed 1) over the UNESCO budget, 2) with means from the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) and 3) of member countries' UNESCO commissions.

Among the earliest achievements of these activities are the conventions facilitating duty-free inter-library loans and exchanges of publications, and the copy-right conventions.

The non-governmental organizations, IFLA and FID, were early brought into the UNESCO picture both as receivers of modest subventions and to carry out individual projects.

During the 70's abbreviations conquered the programs. UNISIST was born on the initiative of the non-governmental International Council of Scientific Unions. The acronym UNISIST has not been abbreviated from any string of words. It can be characterized as a long term plan for the creation, through voluntary co-operation, of a global information network within the sciences and their applications, to which social sciences were added more recently.

NATIS, standing for a National Information System emerged as a kind of a competitor or complementary program to UNISIST and centered on national infra-structures and policies, and international programs like the Universal Bibliographic Control, UBC, initiated by IFLA.

UNISIST and NATIS were managed by two secretariates reporting to different departments of the UNESCO secretariate and the danger of overlapping became evident. Finally, the 19th General Conference of UNESCO in 1976 had two alternatives, namely to draw a clear border-line between the two programs or to combine the programs into a general information programme.

The first mentioned alternative would have entailed the danger of deepening the ancient breach between library services on the one hand and information services on the other, at a moment when several member countries of UNESCO worked toward an integration of scientific information supply. Fortunately the 1976 General Conference accepted the amalgamation of the two programs into a General Information Program (PGI) with a combined secretariate reporting directly to the Director of the Office of Studies and Programming.

The aim of the PGI program is to

- promote the creation of library and information policies and plans;
- promote development and use of methods and standards;
- promote the development of information infra-structures and the use of modern methods for the collection, processing, and dissemination of information, and to
- promote the education of both information specialists and users with special reference to the needs of developing countries paying special attention to technology transfer from industrialized countries to developing countries.

In addition to development aid the UNESCO programs have resulted in studies and publications. Their quality and usefulness, from our point of view, varies greatly, as the preparation is commissioned to different specialists and groups, and because they are published to meet needs of developing countries. Among noteworthy publications are:

"Education and Training of Users of Scientific and Technical Information, Unisist Guide for Teachers" by our former president, Professor A.J. Evans et al.

"Handbook for Information Systems and Services" by Pauline Atherton.

Proceedings and reports from conferences, seminars etc., listed in the new periodical General Information Programme - Unisist Bulletin reflect the lively meeting activities.

The establishment of international centers for specific questions has been encouraged - the ISDS-centre, International Serials Data System, in Paris is best known.

In addition to the General Information Programme, there are several projects launched by the sectoral parts of the UNESCO-house. In the science sector there is a small project "Science Policy Information System, SPINES" and in the social science sector preliminary work is being made on an international information system on architecture, ARKISYST. It is the task of the PGI-sec-

tion to coordinate these projects as well as others in the educational and cultural programmes.

IATUL members have contributed to PGI in several ways:

- serving as members of the Intergovernmental Council for the PGI with its working groups and of the Advisory Committee,
- preparing publications and undertaking technical assistance assignments in developing countries.

Although it is trivial, I should like to propose a technical assistance program, the aim of which would be to increase donations of duplicates from our libraries to scientific and technological libraries in the developing world. Many technical assistance projects seem to neglect "soft technologies" in that aid concerns development of local automated library systems or databanks, while access to documents is not developed at the same pace. Shipping duplicate volumes of recent periodicals and abstract journals to libraries in developing countries, which have still more limited grants for buying foreign literature than we have, would be an inexpensive form of development aid, which, however, would fill a real need. All that is needed is an organizational effort by the UNESCO PGI-section.

The second Intergovernmental UNISIST Conference unfortunately takes place concurrently with our meeting, in Paris. Its main task is to evaluate the progress made and to direct future developments. Let us hope that wise draft resolutions will be passed.

#### 1.2 ECE, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

The scientific and technological senior advisers of the ECE have regularly questions concerning information services on their agenda. Presently the organization does not have concrete projects in this field.

Similar regional organizations in other parts of the world have been more active.

#### 1.3 UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization

UNIDO operates an information service for industries in developing countries. Its series "Information Sources in ...." for different industrial branches are useful directories.

#### 1.4 ECOSOC, United Nations Economic and Social Council and UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

ECOSOC and UNCTAD are presently active - accompanied by several other international organizations and national committees - finalizing the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology, which will be held this autumn. Information services and technology transfer are on the agenda.

#### 1.5 IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency of the United Nations

IAEA was the first IGO to create an information system in which both the input and the dissemination of output are completely decentralized. INIS, the International Nuclear Information System, has become a model adopted by others. Many of us consider it a miracle that a system could be developed and maintained with such a degree of decentralization. Only the processing, checking and merging of the data are centralized to the IAEA-secretariat in Vienna<sup>2</sup>.



The number of participating member countries is 60 supplemented by a dozen international organizations.

Probably all of your libraries have made use of INIS Atom-index as well as of INIS on-line which is searchable a.o. at the IAEA secretariat, at the Nuclear Establishment of Belgium, and at Helsinki University of Technology Library. We have chosen to maintain the two latest volumes of INIS on-line on the Universities' computer mainly for training purposes, because the input belongs to our duties. The database is also connected to SCANNET, the Scandinavian data network dedicated to library and information purposes, to facilitate its use in all Scandinavian countries.

#### 1.6 FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FAO adopted the system developed for the nuclear field for its own information system AGRIS, which accumulates with about 100.000 references a year through decentralised input, while INIS input is limited to about 70.000 references with abstracts. The backup-network of libraries, presently counting 17 libraries, has been christened AGLINET, and an "Aglinet Union List of Serials" will be published shortly

#### 1.7 ILO, United Nations International Labour Organization

ILO has created - to begin with to meet the needs of its secretariat in Geneva - a computer based information system which covers the field of ILOs activities.

#### 1.8 UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme

The UNEP secretariat has, following the decentralized pattern, created an IR-system for locating experts and ongoing projects in the field of environmental protection.

### 2. Other intergovernmental organizations active in the library and information field

#### 2.1 OECD, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OECD counts as its members only Western-European countries and Australia, Japan, Canada, USA and New Zealand.

Among its working groups there used to be a Scientific and Technological Information Policy Group, which was instrumental in the 60's in opening the channels from the United States to Europe as regards the use of the American computer based information systems. In this "stone age", the use meant off-line batch processing.

This working group was amalgamated in 1977 with an earlier Computer Utilization Group and the result was ICCP, Working Party on Information, Computer and Communications Policy. The ICCP programme includes some projects of special interest to us, namely "International Databases and Networks", "Implementation of new strategies for business information" and "Changes in Government Policymaking Structures in the ICCP-field" as well as "Information to less developed countries". The main emphasis of the programme is presently on computer and communications aspects, marginal to our interests.

#### 2.2 EC, European Community

CIDST, Committee for Scientific and Technical Information and Documentation, is better known to most of you who have participated in the planning and imple-

mentation of EURONET to commence traffic this summer. The debate of today centers on document delivery systems.

We who come from non-EC-countries hope to reach agreements making it possible for us to gain access to the many databases in EURONET-hosts.

### 2.3 ICSTI, The International Centre for Scientific and Technical Information of the CMEA Member Countries

ICSTI in Moscow has the task of developing methods and equipment to bring the national information systems of the member states closer to each other. ICSTI also functions as a joint International Standard Serials Numbering Centre of the member countries in relation to UNISIST<sup>3</sup>.

### 2.4 Council of Europe

The Committee for Cultural Co-operation (CCC) of the Council of Europe is working towards an information system in the field of education. This system is known as EUDISED.

### 2.5 ESA, European Space Agency

The ESRIN centre has offered the largest selection, on the European continent, of databases of interest to our libraries. I had the pleasure of visiting the centre during the Easter week and was impressed by the development plans including a.o. experiments with CIM, Computer Input Microform, combined with high speed transmission via satellite. This futurological experiment gives promise of speedier document delivery as full size copies to support on-line information retrieval.

## 3. Scandinavian intergovernmental organizations

### 3.1 NORDINFO, The Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries

As was to be expected I cannot by-pass the IGO closest to my heart with its secretariat housed in my library. NORDINFO was preceded by NORDDOK established by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1970. The terms of reference of NORDDOK were limited to scientific and technical information, excluding other activities of research libraries. This error was corrected in 1976, when NORDDOK was suspended and the new NORDINFO was given a wider mandate<sup>4</sup>.

The main emphasis in NORDINFO activities is on making grants for library and information development projects. NORDINFO's working programme has four sub-sections:

- 1) Policy development and co-ordination (a.o. forecasting future developments);
- 2) Collection building and development of location instruments to facilitate document delivery through interlending (a.o. a computerized union catalogue of periodicals in Scandinavian libraries)
- 3) Databases and networks (a.o. linking databases to SCANNET)
- 4) Education of information specialists and users (a.o. textbooks and guides)

The smaller the number of governments involved and the more similar the member countries are, as regards history, geography, culture and economy, the easier it is to further international co-operation. These conditions apply to Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden to the extent, that we in the library and information business usually forget that there are boundaries between our countries.

#### 4. Bilateral intergovernmental co-operation

Co-operative bilateral agreements are also made on the governmental level. This paper would, however, become a book, if bilateral IGO's and bilateral development co-operation would be dealt with.

#### 5. Conclusions

Co-operation in library and information service has long been a deed of necessity and its need increases, as service requirements mount and the information flood rises, while library budgets stand still.

IGO's have played a very important role in fostering international co-operation and further progress is envisaged. The strength in IGO programs, as compared with that of programs fostered by non-governmental organizations, of course, lies in their financial and personnel resources and in the fact that member governments have agreed to do their share. These circumstances also have negative effects of bureaucratic nature.

Non-governmental organizations are needed to supplement the work of IGO's to ensure grass root involvement in programs and introduction of new ideas. IGO's should continue to delegate projects to be carried out by the non-governmental organizations in our field and increase the annual grants made to them, in order to ensure that co-operation in library and information service is developed efficiently and with creativity.

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3. International Forum on Information and Documentation 3 (2) 1978
4. ZILLIACUS, Tua Collaboration between Scandinavian libraries. To be published in Libri (1) 1979

#### DISCUSSION

Mr. M.B. Line: I will take up the suggestion that duplicates of journals might be redistributed to developing countries with the IFLA Section on the Exchange of Publications, as a possible contribution to the VAP programme.

Törnudd: Thanks.

Prof. A.J. Evans: Although the UN preaches collaboration, there is a need for various parts of the UN family to know about each other's work, for example between UNESCO and UNIDO in the field of training of information specialists. In the early days of UNISIST, it was a long time before IFLA and FID were involved in the discussions with ICSU and thus able to cooperate.

Mr. C.G. Wood: Regarding EURONET and the delays in the realisation of the project, can someone tell me what the latest position is - please?

Mr. M.W. Hill: At a recent meeting in Luxembourg it was reported that EURONET would be 'live' in the autumn. However, it was also said that this would be 'later'. I understand the delays were technical, on the part of contractors, and have now been resolved. One notices an increasing trend for UN bodies, especially UNESCO, to involve NGO's in their work, or, to put it the other way, for NGO's to seek UNESCO funds for their work. Do you consider this a wholly desirable trend, or are there risks?

Törnudd: Yes, it would be beneficial.

Line: The UAP programme was initiated by IFLA, but Unesco's support is vital. There is little danger of domination, because UNESCO-funded projects are carried out by IFLA and other bodies, and funds are also obtained from other sources.

Törnudd: Tied money is better than no money!